Interim Advice

on

Unlocking Gridlock and Promoting Livable Communities in Central Ontario

Central Ontario Smart Growth Panel
August 14, 2002

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I. MANDATE OF THE CENTRAL ONTARIO SMART GROWTH PANEL AND SUB-PANELS

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing established the Central Ontario Smart Growth Panel on February 11, 2002, one of five such panels across the province. City of Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion was appointed Chair of the Central Ontario Panel, and Dr. Gordon Chong, Chair of GO Transit, was named Vice-Chair.

The Panel is charged with the task of providing advice to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) on the creation of a Smart Growth Strategy for the Central Zone. The strategy will have a broad, multi-sectoral scope and will articulate a vision for the long-term growth of the Central Zone. The Central Ontario Panel has also been asked, in the short-term, to provide advice on two priority issues: Unlocking gridlock and promoting livable communities; and Rethinking waste.

To assist in its work, the Central Panel established three sub-panels on the Smart Growth Strategy and the two priority issues. Sub-Panels include both panel members and non-members who possess relevant knowledge and expertise. The Sub-Panels provided advice and information to the Central Panel.

The Unlocking Gridlock Sub-Panel was established in February 2002 and Dr. Gordon Chong was appointed Chair of the Sub-Panel.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUE

Why is Gridlock a Smart Growth Issue

Gridlock has an enormous impact on our communities. Over the last few decades, homes have been built in areas that make Ontarians dependent on cars when they travel to school and work, or manage their daily tasks. Moving people and goods around Central Ontario is increasingly difficult. The so-called rush hour now lasts 13 hours. Transit participation is declining. In 1986, 22% of all morning peak travel was by transit, while in 1991, it was down to 19%, and in 1996, and it was down to 15%. Central Ontario is projected to grow by another 2.5 million people over the next 20 years. Commuters stuck in traffic have less time to spend with their families and friends. If the projected population growth continues to make the same settlement choices as over the last 20 years, and people continue to make the same transportation choices, the congestion on our roads will double today's hour and a half travel time from Toronto to Hamilton – becoming a 3 hour trip in the year 2021. This congestion costs the economy billions of dollars each year due to delays of goods shipments.

Gridlock affects our environment, our economy, and our quality of life. Vehicles idling on our roads and highways produce pollution. Carbon dioxide emissions double when speeds drop from 55 to 30 km/hr, and hydrocarbon emissions triple at speeds less than 60 km/hr compared to a constant speed of 80 km/hr. Our atmosphere continues to deteriorate as the number of smog advisories in the Central Zone grows.

Land use patterns impact the number of single-occupancy vehicle trips, and determine the availability of walking, cycling, and transit use. In heavily developed urban corridors, where existing development, major retaining walls, structural abutments and other infrastructure are significant

constraints to road widening, strong public transit systems are critical. Transit systems must be maintained and renewed to keep current users, and expanded strategically to attract new riders and prevent congestion. At the same time, highways and arterial roads will continue to play a critical role in Ontario's transportation network.

Our economic well-being is improved by a strategy that addresses how we can expand and enhance our existing transportation system for daily commutes, tourism, goods movement, and border access.

Benefits of Action

An integrated transit system uses less energy and space per capita. A full bus removes 40 vehicles from the road, saves 70,000 litres of fuel and avoids 9 tonnes of air pollutants a year. Public transit is most efficient during peak commuting periods, when buses are full.

Integrating land use planning and transportation planning through transit supportive land use will also increase transportation choice which increases mobility, enable municipalities to better protect agricultural land and natural features, and will optimize infrastructure investment.

Incident management also plays a significant role in relieving gridlock. An analysis of the U.S. state of Georgia's NAVIGATOR system showed results of a 30% reduction in response, identification and dispatch time for incidents, and a savings of $US 44.6M in 1997 alone. Additional benefits included less air emissions from idling, reduced fuel consumption, and more satisfied travellers.

III. PANEL AND SUB-PANEL PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING INTERIM ADVICE

The Central Ontario Smart Growth Panel established the Unlocking Gridlock and Promoting Livable Communities Sub-Panel. The Sub-Panel was asked to identify all potential short-term initiatives based on their comprehensive review of all available studies and initiatives. Actions were prioritized based on ease of implementation, cost and effectiveness. To determine the effectiveness, the panel analyzed the root causes of the problem, the capacity to accommodate increased transit ridership, and the steps that can be taken to attract people to transit.

The short-term recommendations range from broad commitment statements to actual opportunities and action items. The commitment statements provide the basis for all levels of government and transit providers to begin prioritizing their investment and planning decisions related to growth. The action items provide real opportunities for all governments and transit providers to take innovative steps, within their existing budgets, that will begin to provide some relief to congested areas.

This includes the provision of higher-order transit (either bus or rail) operating in a separate right of way or priority situation, along existing transportation corridors. The Panel has identified Hwy 407/7 and Hwy 403/Eglinton corridors and linkages to the Yonge Street and Spadina subway lines as priority corridors that will accelerate the development of a system of inter-regional, higher-order transit.

Medium- and long-term actions identified by the Sub-Panel included expanding the system capacity (both transit and highways) and integrating land use and transportation planning. The Panel has deferred discussion of the long term transportation network until it can be discussed in the context of

the smart growth strategy. The Panel will continue to work with MTO and other smart growth ministries on the long term actions, including the integration of transportation planning with growth management objectives.

Many of the recommendations in this report make specific reference to corridors and transit providers in the Greater Toronto Area. This is because the Panel has focused to date on short term actions to ease gridlock, and much of the current gridlock occurs on a daily basis in the populated areas of the GTA. However, the range of solutions proposed in this report (including transit priority, incident management, fare integration, and inter-regional transit services) can be applied across the Central Zone. Moreover, they should be applied wherever possible in a pro-active manner in order to avoid future gridlock.

IV. INTERIM ADVICE

The Panel recommendations to relieve gridlock are organized into five categories:

1. *Transportat ion and Land Use Planning* addresses the long-term solution to gridlock. These recommendations will largely require initial commitment to a process from all stakeholders, followed by implementation over the medium and long-term, in concert with the overall Central Ontario Smart Growth Strategy.

2. *The Tr ansit Imperative* encompasses the recommendations about capital investment, new services, and incentives required to bring the zone's transit network up to a standard, which will attract and maintain significant ridership to relieve gridlock, and accommodate future growth and build stronger, healthier communities.

3. *Transit Coordination* includes recommendations about greater integration among transit providers.

4. *Transit Sustaina bility* includes recommendations about funding formulas and linking provincial transit investment decisions to the advice contained in this report.

5. *Tr ansportation Corridors: goods movement and incident management* includes recommendations about managing the significant flows of traffic that are heavily dependent on the highway and road network.

The subsequent pages of this document provide context and details of specific short-term recommendations.

1.Transp ortation and Land Use Planning

1.1 Commitment to an Inter-Regional Transportation Network – **The Panel recommends that all levels of government, in collaboration with the private sector, commit to creating an integrated inter-regional transportation network.**

Achieving Smart Growth will require a greater integration of transportation and land use planning than has taken place in the past. An integrated transportation network is required to serve commuters, daily trip requirements, tourism, and goods movement. By committing to this network, all levels of government and the private sector will protect future transportation corridors and lay the foundation for a network that will ultimately include highways, roads, transit, rail, and air and marine elements.

The Central Panel and the Gridlock Sub-Panel have been working closely with the Ministry of Transportation in its development of long-term strategic directions for the future. This work will provide the foundation for the development of the overall transportation network for the Central Ontario Smart Growth Strategy.

The Panel recognizes that in developing the strategy, highways and arterials are a very important part of the transit network, goods movement network, as well as part of the commuter network for automobiles. The Panel intends to continue to work with MTO to ensure that there is a strong link between the development of the growth strategy and the integrated transportation network.

The Sub-Panel discussion on transit also has been built upon the work of the former Greater Toronto Services Board, and MTO's current work to identify an inter-regional transit network. Details of some corridor alignments, technology, and priorities for implementation require further discussion.

1.2 Transit Supportive Land Use Planning – **The Panel recommends that the Smart Growth Strategy Sub-Panel identify criteria for the appropriate development of a hierarchy of nodes, to achieve transit supportive land use, and that the Strategy include policies and strategies that support compact development.**

For the transportation network to be successful and linked with growth management, transit supportive land use planning must be part of the Smart Growth Strategy for Central Ontario. The only way to accommodate future growth without more gridlock and air pollution is to design communities around transit access and provide the necessary transit services.

Transit supportive land use will require integrating transportation nodes (multi-modal areas served by higher order transit) and land use nodes (areas of mixed use compact development). It will require identifying those nodes, and the corridors linking them, that have opportunity for investment in higher order transit supported by higher density mixed-use development. Other areas will be identified for medium density development supported by lower order transit. An appropriate number of nodes will need to be determined over the medium and long term, since an

excess of nodes will disperse investment and development, and result in insufficient numbers of people to support transit, resulting in more gridlock.

Policies to support compact development, pedestrian oriented design, transit nodes and corridors, and other aspects of transit supportive land use planning should also be developed and refined, supported and strengthened through the Provincial Policy Statement, currently under review.

1.3 Education - **The Panel recommends that the Province work with non-government organizations and municipalities on Smart Growth public awareness, specifically including information about the benefits of compact development.**

To build support for transit supportive land use, compact development, and smart growth in general, education should begin immediately. The perception among Panel members is that few Ontario residents know about the Ontario Smart Growth initiative, and this is supported by a recent Environics poll showing that 47% of Ontarians strongly agree that the Provincial Government is not doing enough to stop urban sprawl (July 2002, prepared for the Sustainability Network). Education will be a pre-requisite to implementation and the province should work with other organizations to accelerate current efforts. The Federation of Ontario Naturalists has recently launched a Smart Growth education campaign, while the Sierra Club and Conservation Council of Ontario have promoted smart growth through their websites and literature. Several municipalities in the central zone, notably Niagara Region and the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, are also implementing smart growth education programs.

2.Th e Transit Imperative

The Province of Ontario has made a strong commitment to transit by renewing public investment in transit in the central zone through the Golden Horseshoe Transit Investment Partnerships (GTIP) initiative, the Ontario Transit Renewal Program (OTRP), and the repatriation of GO Transit. This is a good first step, but there are a number of additional measures that can also be taken in the short-term by all levels of government to build a transit network that can attract significant ridership to relieve congestion and improve air quality.

2.1 A Well-Maintained System – **The Panel recommends that transit operators, municipalities, the province, and the federal government commit to adequate levels of investment in transit renewal in order that the system can be well-maintained over the long-term.**

A fundamental starting point to build transit use and unlock gridlock is a state of good repair of the existing vehicles and supporting infrastructure. This means re-investing in existing systems to ensure they can continue to operate efficiently and safely. Historically, buses were built to last 18+ years with proper maintenance and this was incorporated into renewal planning. American guidelines indicate that bus fleets should last about 12 years, and buses from the USA (where some Ontario transit authorities purchase buses) are therefore only built to meet US guidelines, and buses can now be expected to last from 12-18 years. The average age of the Ontario bus fleet is

currently between 12 and 13 years, which means a large number of buses are due or will soon be due for renewal.

Ontario's Transit Renewal Program is part of the Province's 10-year, $9 billion transit investment plan. The OTRP will cost share up to 1/3 of eligible transit capital renewal projects in Ontario. $100 million was announced for 2002. Investment by all levels of government in transit renewal are required to replace these aging fleets. In addition to investing in bus fleets, funding is also required to maintain capital transit plants, specifically stations and trackage.

2.2 Inter-Regional Transit – **The Panel recommends the following priority elements of an inter-regional transit network:**

a) **Provide a base level of transit services (e.g., 10-20 minutes bus service in peak periods) on a comprehensive and integrated grid of inter-regional north-south and east-west corridors, linking key nodes of high travel demand;**
b) **Increase GO Transit services, including but not limited to the GO 10 year growth plan, which will lessen gridlock and advance smart growth; and**
c) **Provide a higher-order of transit services on specific corridors connecting key nodes with the appropriate mode of transit, specifically the Hwy 407/7 corridor, linkages to the Yonge Street and Spadina subways and the Hwy 403/Eglinton corridor.**

An integrated transportation network for Central Ontario will include significant inter-regional transit. The Gridlock Sub-Panel and Panel discussion has been built upon the studies by the former Greater Toronto Services Board (GTSB), and MTO's subsequent work to identify an inter-regional transit network. This should be pursued further, as should expansion of GO Transit as an integral part of the inter-regional network, to connect cities outside of the GTA such as Barrie, Peterborough and Kitchener-Waterloo to the transit network. Details of some corridor alignments, technology, and priorities for implementation require further discussion.

2.2 a) Establish a base level of transit services in the GTA:
At this time, many existing areas of high growth in the Greater Toronto Area are inadequately served by inter-regional transit. A grid of east-west and north-south inter-regional transit services was originally proposed by the Greater Toronto Services Board and has been further refined by MTO, to connect the City of Toronto with the surrounding municipalities, and to connect these municipalities with each other. In the short-term, this area within the Central Zone could be served mainly by large coaches and buses operating in mixed traffic, complemented by transit priority features at bottlenecks. Frequent (10 to 20 minute) service during peak periods and appropriate (20 to 30 minute) service off-peak will be sufficient to serve current demand. The system can be augmented and extended beyond the GTA over time as demand warrants, but will provide an essential base level of service in the short-term. The Panel, the Gridlock Sub-Panel, and the Strategy Sub-Panel will continue to identify opportunities for longer term expansion of the network, in the context of the development of a Smart Growth Strategy for the zone.

A July 12, 2002 GO Transit Board report suggests that in the longer-term, a full bus rapid transit (BRT) system can economically deliver fast, convenient and reliable "train-like" service. GO Transit, TTC, local transit authorities and/or the private sector could be operators on the system.

The GO Board report identified a number of short-term improvements as a first step to building a BRT network. These include Hwy 403 busway, transit priority and commuter parking (identified in sections 2.2c, 2.3 and 2.8 of this report, respectively), as well as bus stop amenities/bus stops at key interface locations.

2.2 b) Increase GO Transit services:
The Panel recognizes that the expansion of GO Transit's existing radial network beyond the GTA is an important long-term goal (15+ years), and planning for this will be addressed through the Central Zone smart growth strategy, and the development of an integrated transportation network.

In the medium term, GO's Ten Year Plan outlines actions to increase the core capacity of the rail and bus systems, in order to accommodate current demand and short term projected growth.

GO Transit recently reviewed its short term priorities, and identified a number of commuter parking lots (described in 2.8), the purchase of new coaches, and the expansion of key layovers (areas for trains to rest, refuel and receive minor maintenance when not in service midday and overnight) as some of the priorities over the next 1-3 years, in order to increase capacity and/or reduce operating costs (July 12, 2002 Board report).

2.2 c) Higher-order transit on key corridors:
The Panel strongly advises that provision of higher-order transit on corridors connecting strategic nodes in surrounding municipalities, is an important step towards the smart growth goals of providing transportation choice (a real alternative to the private automobile) and improving air quality. Higher order transit is bus or light/heavy rail that operates in its own right-of-way or in a priority situation, and therefore moves more efficiently than the regular flow of traffic and can carry large numbers of people quickly and comfortably. While the Panel continues to work with MTO on planning strategic directions for the future, the identification of the following corridors for high order transit are some critical first steps.

Hwy 407/7 Corridor:
More express services, selected priority measures to bypass bottlenecks, linkages to adjacent land use nodes, and improved connections to the TTC's Sheppard and Yonge subways are needed on the Hwy 407/7 corridor.

York Region has a 5-year action plan as part of a longer-term inter-regional expansion to be delivered using a recently-announced public-private partnership for rapid transit on Hwy 7, from Jane Street to Hwy 27, and from Yonge Street to Kennedy Road. This project would complement any network ultimately agreed to by the Province, GO Transit, TTC and other local transit authorities.

Linkages to Yonge Street and Spadina Subway:
The Panel supports the work necessary to provide higher order transit on Jane Street linking Hwy 7 to York University and the Downsview subway station; and on Yonge Street from Hwy 7 to the Finch subway station. The implementation of these plans will both improve transit service and relieve gridlock in some of the Central Zone's busiest corridors.

Hwy 403/Eglinton:
On Hwy 403, GO Transit advises that increased service using existing shoulder lane infrastructure on Hwy 403 and Centreview Drive and improvements to enhance the transit connection to Square One Shopping Centre could be implemented quickly.

The City of Mississauga has also identified the Hwy 403/Eglinton corridor for a future transitway and received EA approval for transit priority lanes. The eastern part of this corridor will allow future linkages to high order transit in the north using Hwy 427 and Hwy 407. Components of this transitway precursor system have been constructed, including a new Mississauga City Centre transit terminal. Its location provides inter-regional bus services quick access to and from Hwy 403. In the short-term, important gains may be made by acquiring additional buses that will expand existing inter-regional bus services into Toronto.

Some of the services described above on these corridors could be provided by the private sector bus industry as well as other transit authorities.

2.3 Transit Priority – **The Panel recommends that measures be implemented to increase the priority given to transit on roadways.**

Transit priority results in faster flow of transit vehicles, which makes transit more attractive to riders and reduces operating costs (reduced round trip times which reduces required number of vehicles). Transit priority measures include queue jump lanes, yield-to-transit regulations, signal priority, bus lanes on existing highway shoulders, and peak-period turn and parking restrictions.

Bus use of highway shoulder lanes:
The use of existing freeway shoulders as bus lanes could quickly increase capacity, bus speeds and reliability along transit corridors, where the shoulders are already built to standard. Where congestion pinch points exist, buses could also use the shoulder and merge back into traffic.

GO Transit's Ten Year Plan has identified the potential for bus shoulder lanes on Hwy 403, and the section west of Mississauga could serve as a pilot project because shoulders on this section were built to carry buses as part of Mississauga's plans for a transitway.

GO Transit and MTO are also looking at the implementation of shoulder queue jump or HOV opportunities on highways.

High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes:
The TTC has a number of existing HOV lanes, and would like to improve some of these and implement new ones, parts of Finch, Lawrence, Eglinton, St. Clair, and Dufferin, among others. MTO is undertaking an assessment of potential for HOV lanes on the 400-series highways.

Queue jump:
Queue jump lanes with signal priority would create reserved bus lanes that allow transit vehicles to enter and clear intersections before other traffic. In order to have a real impact on transit travel

time, this should be implemented at key intersections along an entire stretch of an arterial, so that congestion is not merely pushed to the next intersection.

Hwy 7 in York Region has been identified as a potential pilot project using queue jump lanes with signal priority at seven congestion points in Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan. This would be integrated with the plans for higher-order transit on Hwy 7 (see recommendation 2.2 c).

Signal priority:
Even in the absence of a special queue jump lane, signal priority for transit vehicles can help move transit more quickly. At present, the TTC employs signal priority at 260 intersections on eight routes, with benefits of faster service and an annual savings of $1.5 million in operating costs, and ten streetcars and four buses in vehicle savings. The TTC would like to expand signal priority to 27 additional routes.

Yield-to-transit regulation:
The authority to enact "yield-to-transit regulations" already exists in Ontario legislation. It would be fairly straightforward to enact the necessary regulations, which would apply across Ontario. The cost is minimal, as only driver education regarding its initiation is required. Experience in Quebec and British Columbia suggests that reasonable benefits are achieved without special enforcement. Although potential savings have not been quantified, travel time roughly equates to operating cost, thus a 1% reduction in overall travel time should result in about a 1% reduction in operating costs. In Toronto, this could be in the order of $2-3 million savings for every 1% reduction in bus travel time.

2.4 Expand Capacity of Union Station – **The Panel recommends that all planned improvements to Union Station be completed as quickly as possible, to clear the bottlenecks and allow more passenger throughput during peak hours.**

Expanding the capacity of Union Station is a key activity for the short-, medium- and long-term. This will take some time, but needs to be initiated in the short-term to improve TTC service and if the GO rail system is to be in a position to expand in the future. Some elements of the expansion have been initiated but others are not yet fully funded.

With assistance from all levels of government, the construction of a second subway platform at Union Station that will expand access is underway, as part of the Toronto waterfront revitalization initiative. Other required Union Station improvements include:

- improve rail service by providing more stairwells from platforms;
- improve track layout to increase the speed and frequency of trains;
- shared use of platforms with VIA trains;
- construction of a new shed-roof; and
- improvements to passenger environment.

2.5 Build Key Rail Grade Separations – **The Sub-Panel recommends that key rail-to-rail grade separations be initiated immediately to allow the separation of east-west freight traffic from north-south passenger rail traffic**.

Where GO and freight train tracks intersect, GO Trains must wait for freight trains to cross. To increase service and avoid delays, the tracks need to be grade separated. While these improvements are expensive and will take several years to complete, they must be initiated in a timely fashion in order to accommodate expansion to serve a growing population and transit ridership. GO Transit has identified priority rail grade separation initiatives for Bradford, Stouffville and West Toronto.

2.6 Expand Intra-Regional Transit - **The Panel recommends that the Province and Federal Government commit to financially supporting the expansion of intra-regional transit services in the Central Zone.**

The Panel discussions to date focused mainly on inter-regional transit, and maintaining a state of good repair of local transit. However, many municipalities in the Central Zone, particularly outside of the GTA, lack sufficient local transit and require significant expansion of services and networks in order to support transit ridership and provide a real alternative to the private automobile.

Urban areas experiencing population growth throughout the region such as Barrie, Burlington, Hamilton and Kitchener-Waterloo face pressure to improve transit service within their municipalities. Some areas have seen increases in ridership while most have seen declines in per capita ridership. Investment in these transit systems would increase the potential for improved performance of each system, assist in increasing transit modal share, and improve transit services which feed into the inter-regional transit network.

2.7 New Commuter Transit Services – **The Panel recommends that new transit services be targeted, in particular to address congestion during peak travel times, such as more express routes to major employers**.

Increasing express services to major employers (e.g. IBM, Royal Bank headquarters) and dense employment areas will attract riders who would otherwise drive in order to reach work quickly. Several pilot projects are underway in Ontario. For example, the Province of Ontario, in conjunction with other levels of government and local chambers of commerce in the Central Zone, already provides financial support to the Black Creek Regional Transportation Management Association to address the need for alternative transportation. BCRTMA has helped employers such as Bombardier Aerospace, Knoll, the Province of Ontario and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to launch commuter programs that incorporate more transit use among employees. The Region of Waterloo has developed a program with two major employers. Both the City of Toronto and York Region want to launch similar initiatives in the GTA.

2.8 Increase Access to Transit – **The Panel recommends that in the short-term, commuter parking lots and car pool lots be expanded, and that shared-use lots be pursued, at locations where lack of parking is limiting transit use.**

The Panel also recommends more local bus routes to transit stations, and increased multi-modal facilities at stations to encourage cycling and walking.

In the medium and long-term, the Panel recommends increasing density of development in the vicinity of transit stations, including locations where parking currently exists.

In addition to increasing service and improving service levels, actions should be taken to improve access to GO Transit and TTC commuter stations. Experience has indicated that parking lots, particularly at GO and TTC stations are filled quickly and have immediate positive impacts in terms of taking cars off roads and highways. Shared use lots have been successful at Yorkdale, Kennedy Station, and Warden Woods. The Panel cautions that increasing parking is a short-term solution, and recognizes that over the long-term, increasing density at transit hubs and improved transit services to GO stations is a preferred solution.

Commuter Parking:
GO Transit has identified the following commuter train parking lot construction/expansion projects for 2002-2006 to accommodate over 6645 new riders per day.
1.Ri chmond Hill Parking Expansion (600 spaces)
2.East Gwil limbury Station (1,400 spaces)
3.Mim ico Parking Expansion (70 spaces)
4.Whitb y Parking Expansion (500 spaces)
5.Bradford Parking Expansion (300 spaces)
6.Pl easant Station (600 spaces)
7.St reetsville Parking Expansion (300 spaces)
8.Lakeridge S tation (1,500 spaces)

The TTC has also identified phase one expansion of commuter parking at Kennedy, Finch, Downsview, Wilson, and Kipling stations for 1200 new spaces, and a phase two expansion of an additional 6,500 new spaces at Kennedy, Finch, Downsview, Wilson, CNE, Kipling, Islington, and Mimico.

GO Transit has also identified potential for bus rapid transit park and ride lots, with about 2,000 parking spots over 10-15 locations in Pickering, Scarborough, Vaughan, Markham, and Mississauga. These parking lots would support an emerging bus rapid transit network along Highways 401, 407, 427, 403, the DVP, and major arterials. The transit priority measures to support BRT along these highways are outlined in 2.6 (Transit Priority).

York Region also intends to provide commuter parking lots at gateways in rural municipalities that will provide access to the transit network. These gateways will include telephone facilities, washrooms and supportive service/retail uses.

Linked to the provision of commuter parking at GO Stations is the charge for parking. In the GO Transit system, the charge for parking is built into the fare. Separating the parking fee and fare would reduce the cost for those not using the parking, and could therefore provide an incentive to take transit, carpool or walk to the GO Station. The Panel suggests that a pilot project be undertaken at selected parking lots to assess the feasibility and impact of separating the parking and fare costs.

Local Access to Transit:
York Region Transit will increase local access to TTC as part of its 5 Year Action Plan. Two priority segments, connecting the Richmond Hill Centre to the Yonge subway at Finch station and Vaughan Corporate Centre to York University and the Spadina subway at Downsview station, are also consistent with TTC priorities. Moreover, rapid transit on these corridors will quickly boost ridership for both systems while alleviating gridlock on Hwy 7. Similarly, the GTA West Transit Corridor proposes to connect Burlington to Toronto through Halton using the Hwy 403/Eglinton corridor within Mississauga, creating linkages to the Bloor and Spadina subways. These actions are included in the provision of higher order transit in these corridors (see recommendation 2.2c).

Access to GO rail stations varies greatly throughout the system. While local transit service is excellent at the most common morning peak-period destination (Union Station), accessibility at the origin station is often less convenient. Local transit connectors have been established successfully in several municipalities, with extensive coverage in Oakville, Pickering, and Richmond Hill, in particular. Making transit attractive requires that both trip-ends be reasonably accessible. Local connections can be made either by regular routes, or by special "GO shuttles" and by "concierge" type van pools from private residential areas. Perhaps the greatest benefit of these types of connectors is to provide an alternative to park-and-ride and, thus, relieve some of the demand pressure from the busiest park-and-ride lots at GO stations.

The use of bicycles to access the GO rail system provides another means of reducing demand for automobile park-and-ride facilities. This action would tend to be more successful at stations surrounded by moderately compact development and a street network compatible with bicycle use. It would also require facilities for which users would feel comfortable about leaving bicycles for extended periods of time such as, for example, at a sheltered area that was reasonably close to GO Transit employee workplaces (e.g. ticket offices) for surveillance.

Increasing Density at Transit Hubs:
In the long-term, increasing density at transit hubs will reduce parking requirements as development intensifies and increases transportation choices to include cycling and walking to reach commuter stations. The Central Ontario Smart Growth Strategy will include recommendations and implementation tools for compact development and transit supportive development nodes (see also recommendation 1.3). This recommendation could also be implemented through the Provincial Policy Statement.

2.9 Transit Fare Incentives – **The Panel recommends the introduction and expansion of discount fare passes. The Panel also recommends implementation of incentives for employers to provide transit passes to employees.**

The provision of a variety of short- (i.e. daily), mid- (i.e. monthly) and long-term (i.e. deep discount annual) passes appeals to a broad range of consumers who are planning to use transit service on a regular basis. The objective is to increase the percentage of pass use, on the understanding that pass-holders will use transit on a more frequent basis. While discounting fares reduces revenue per capita, it can increase gross revenue, and will achieve ridership objectives (see section 4 discussion of performance criteria). The most recent introduction of deep discount programs in Ottawa, London and Waterloo Region have typically resulted in significant ridership increases (estimates in the 1-3 % range) with little or no revenue loss.

Discount fare passes that significantly reduce the cost of transit for regular users will increase ridership and can be implemented in many ways to benefit the general public without employer subsidies. For example, Ottawa's OC Transpo system offers discounts on monthly passes and books of transit tickets to promote transit use among regular and occasional commuters. Vancouver's TransLink offers similar savings to riders in addition to discounted fares during off-peak hours and on weekends. Similar incentives could be pursued to increase ridership on the TTC and GO Transit and while a revenue loss may result in the short-term, higher ridership and revenues will be long-term gains.

Fare passes could be targeted to special groups, specifically post-secondary students. In other Ontario jurisdictions such as Kingston and London, discount passes have changed the way students get to classes. Subsidized through tuition fees ($80-100 contribution), students receive transit passes to cover the semester at a significant discount. Although local transit authorities must increase service on routes that service colleges and universities, they benefit from increased ridership and revenue regardless of whether students use the pass. To implement a similar program in the Central Zone, however, students at each institution would have to approve a referendum endorsing a surcharge to their tuition fees.

The Federal Government has introduced Ecopass, a pilot project that offers discount fares to employees working in downtown Ottawa. The City of Hamilton recently began offering its employees a 50% subsidy towards the cost of a transit pass, provided those with a parking pass first relinquished it. Employer provision of transit passes can be further encouraged by aligning tax policies so that employer-subsidized transit passes are not a taxable benefit, similar to parking subsidies for employees.

2.10 Workplace Incentives for Transit Use – **The Panel recommends that where there is accessible and underutilized commuter transit capacity, that implementation of (or increases to) workplace parking fees be encouraged.**

The price of parking has a significant influence on decisions to ride transit, where transit is an available alternative. Case studies of employer-based programs that involved raising employee parking fees to market rates have shown decreases in single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) use anywhere from 26-81 percent. In the short-term in downtown areas, increasing parking fees should

be pursued and should go hand-in-hand with increasing and expanding transit service. There are a number of locations in the Central Zone, both in downtown Toronto and in the surrounding regions, where an increase in parking fees at workplaces would shift commuter travel onto transit. One example is York University where increases in parking fees have reduced the number of single occupant vehicles and significantly increased ridership on GO Transit. Similarly, the introduction of parking charges at Transport Canada in Ottawa led to a 20 percent decrease in SOV use and respective 16 and 3 percent increases in bus and carpool travel.

All levels of government could demonstrate leadership in implementing this recommendation at their facilities. The discontinuation of free parking for federal employees in the City of Ottawa in the 1970s led to a reduction in single occupancy vehicle trips from 35%-to 27%. Modelling work done as part of the federal government's investigations into the feasibility of meeting the Kyoto greenhouse gas reduction targets estimated that a widespread implementation of workplace parking fees could reduce overall vehicle kilometres travelled in the order of 15-25% depending on the assumed fee level.

3.Tr ansit Coordination

3.1 Fare Collection and Integration – **The Panel recommends the elimination of fare premiums for GO transfers with local transit in all municipalities, and that a long-term plan to integrate TTC and GO fares be developed.**

Greater coordination of fares and services will provide an incentive for riders as it will reduce the hassle and costs of transfer fares and multiple passes. Prior to 1979, an arrangement between several local transit authorities and GO Transit eliminated the fare premium for the rider, and transfer payments were then made by GO to the local authority. Since the introduction of fare premiums (e.g., 25-50 cents when transferring) in these municipalities, local transit systems have seen ridership to GO rail stations decline 17 to 25 percent. By eliminating the premiums again in the short term, ridership will increase on both systems and reduce demand on park and ride facilities at train stations. This will also help to increase access to transit as outlined in recommendation 2.8. The revenue lost by local transit operators may be returned through transfer payment agreements with GO Transit.

The long term integration of discounted TTC and GO Transit fares should significantly boost ridership. The existing Twin Pass program does not provide adequate savings to weekday commuters and costs TTC and GO more than is currently affordable. Future re-integration of GO Transit and TTC will require the creation of a centralized revenue management system to handle transfer payments. This is a long-term goal. Integration of fares should be accompanied by integration of trip planning information – schedules, routes, etc. for easy access by ridership.

3.2 Review Obstacles to Transit Coordination – **The Panel recommends that a review be undertaken to identify and address any legislative obstacles that impede coordination among transit authorities in inter-regional and inter-municipal transit.**

This should be undertaken by MMAH and MTO, in conjunction with the Gridlock Sub-Panel and those transit authorities involved in inter-regional services. It should include a review of legislation such as the *Toronto Act*, which deals with local transit authority.

4.Transit Sustainabili ty

As noted earlier, transit funding from the province has recently increased, but more is needed from all levels of government. At this time, transit operators such as TTC and GO are underfunded such that they must obtain over 80% revenue/cost ratios. This makes some service unfeasible from a financial perspective, even though it might be desirable in order to reduce gridlock and support compact urban form. In order to achieve significant modal shifts from single-occupancy vehicle to transit, and in order to entice future population growth in Central Ontario to use transit, funding priorities must shift, other levels of government must contribute, and funding decisions for transit must be strategic to maximize ridership.

4.1 Smart Growth Performance Criteria – **The Panel recommends that the Province consider a broad range of performance criteria that include smart growth objectives for transit systems, and not limit transit system performance measurement to revenue/cost ratios only.**

GO Transit has excess demand for its services. Under current performance criteria, GO is not encouraged to increase these services, unless nearly full cost recovery can be achieved immediately. While revenue/cost is a very important measure, other measures such as transit supportive land use and increased ridership need to be considered in order to support increases in service levels. This recommendation also applies to regional and local transit investment decisions made by municipalities.

For example, GO Transit has identified additional rail services that could be implemented during off-peak periods, using existing assets, which would not require new capital investment, including approximately 30-minute mid-day and evening service on the Lakeshore corridors, extension of weekend Lakeshore service to Oshawa and Burlington, and limited weekday off-peak train service on the Stouffville and Bradford corridors. These new services would not initially generate the current cost recovery criteria of 85%, and therefore have not been introduced. However, they would make GO Transit more attractive as riders would have more flexibility for return trips, and would attract riders for non-commute trips, which would contribute to smart growth goals and reduce gridlock. Subsidy requirements for these services are currently $13 million annually, and decrease over time as off-peak ridership grows.

4.2 Golden Horseshoe Transit Investment Partnerships – **The Panel recommends that decisions that are made on GTIP support the objectives of Smart Growth, and are consistent with the specific recommendations of the Panel in sections 1, 2, and 3 of this report.**

Decisions on successful GTIP proposals are imminent, and the Panel strongly recommends that they be consistent with the advice in this report. The Panel recognizes that the call for expressions of interest (EOIs) for the current phase of GTIP occurred prior to this Panel's work, and that there may not necessarily be EOIs for the wide range of measures that are being recommended here. Subsequent phases of GTIP should make every effort to include the range of projects identified by the Panel as necessary to unlock gridlock.

5.Tran sportation Corridors: Goods movement and incident management

The Panel has not discussed specific highway routes, and intends to work with MTO on this as part of a long-term transportation network, in parallel with the process to develop a goods movement strategy. The Panel supports MTO's strategy of developing multi-modal, as opposed to single mode (highway), corridors, and the Panel encourages the province to link planning for the expansion and enhancement of transportation corridors, with the Central Zone Smart Growth Strategy, and to place particular emphasis on the movement of goods and border access.

As much as 50% of the congestion we face on highways and arterials results from incidents including crashes, mechanical breakdowns, emergency maintenance, spills, weather conditions, and special events. Effectively managing these incidents can therefore play a major role in reducing congestion in the transportation system.

The Panel recommendations dealing with incident management build upon the valuable work of highway incident stakeholders involved in the Red Tape Commission's Highway Incident Management Task Force, including representatives from emergency services, Canadian Automobile Association, insurance industry, towing industry, trucking industry, other industries and associations, and provincial ministries.

Construction is not considered an incident, but it does affect congestion. MTO has studied construction impacts on travel, and the Ministry attempts to do major work in off-peak hours, although this is increasingly difficult as peak periods are getting longer. Municipalities should also attempt to minimize traffic disruption due to construction on local roads.

5.1 Coordinated Regional Goods Movement - **The Panel recommends that the province and stakeholders develop a regional coordinated goods movement strategy, including short-term opportunities for increased efficiencies.**

There are short term actions to improve goods movement specifically within the region that should be explored. For example, priority lanes, off-street loading and parking facilities, and establishing a regional goods movement sector council are some of the measures identified by key stakeholders including the Centre for Sustainable Transportation, CP Rail, and Moving the Economy.

In addition, a goods movement strategy should be developed that addresses the broader issues and requirements of trade within the zone, with other parts of the Ontario, with other Provinces, and with the USA. This is essential to address long term transportation requirements, and should be initiated immediately and integrated into planning processes. It will require coordinated action among different levels of government in the Central Zone.

5.2 Joint Training and Operational Protocols – **The Panel recommends that joint training and protocols be established among transportation and emergency service agencies on agency responsibilities, communication, scene assessment and command techniques.**

This should be supported by regular coordination among agencies to review effectiveness, rectify problems, and implement new approaches. As well, emergency service providers should investigate opportunities to share equipment belonging to area municipalities in order to utilize closest-available equipment for clearing incidents.

Joint Operational Protocols:
Increasing coordination among transportation and emergency service agencies is a measure that can be implemented within six months and at almost no cost by having agencies meet regularly to improve communications. MTO and the Ontario Provincial Police (through the Solicitor General's Office) should take the lead by organizing meetings of emergency responders to determine response protocols. This recommendation was put forward by the Highway Incident Management Task Force (referred to hereafter as the Incident Management Task Force), with an emphasis that protocols for establishing command at an accident scene be the first order of business.

Another low-cost measure that could be implemented immediately is to require that MTO, the OPP and other emergency services work together to ensure that emergency vehicles, as much as possible, are parked off the roadway at an incident scene. Moreover, investigations and ticket issuance should take place off roads and highways as much as possible.

The Incident Management Task Force also discussed how the OPP can develop protocols to address their response to highway crime scene incidents, such as fatal vehicle collisions. OPP protocols should include performance standards for the clearance of highways, use of special teams to expedite OPP response and enhanced investigation techniques. The Panel supports this action. The costs of developing these protocols are minimal, and this work can be done quickly. Implementation costs would be associated with the use of special teams and new equipment.
Joint Training:
Joint training among transportation and emergency service agencies was also discussed by the Incident Management Task Force. The Panel recommends that all emergency responders receive training in highway incident management and that priority should be given to joint training opportunities involving OPP, MTO and Fire services.

5.3 Clearing of Incidents – **The Panel recommends that legislation be considered that provides emergency service providers with the necessary authority to clear vehicles and debris quickly from highways and roads.**

Traffic congestion due to accidents and air pollution caused by idling cars can be greatly reduced if emergency service providers have authority to clear vehicles and debris quickly from highways and roads. The Incident Management Task Force discussed how the Ministry of Public Safety and Security and MTO can introduce legislative changes that would give police officers appropriate authority to remove or direct the removal of vehicles and debris. This legislation, however, must be reviewed to ensure that OPP officers cannot be sued if they act in good faith when removing vehicles and cargoes to re-establish traffic flow. Embedded into legislation and provincial policy should be the philosophy that incidents be cleared as quickly and safely as possible.

5.4 Road Closure Action Plans – **The Panel recommends that Road Closure Action Plans, similar to that in use by the Region of Halton, be developed by provincial and municipal transportation agencies and emergency service providers to guide responses when incidents occur.**

These plans should include traffic diversion plans, multi-agency communications and inventory coordination, "safe" barriers at worst locations, and improved signage. Ontario already has a planning process in place to develop Road Closure Action Plans and they are expected to be complete within one year. This also builds on an Incident Management Task Force recommendation.

5.5 Extend Incident Detection Systems – **The Panel recommends expanding and integrating incident detection systems, including COMPASS and RESCU.**

Available information suggests this is a very effective means of monitoring and detecting incidents, alerting response teams, advising motorists, and managing traffic flow. Ontario's COMPASS has already improved incident management practices in the province. The system has reduced the average clearance time of incidents from 85 to 30 minutes at a cost of $600,000/km, while displaying incident messages prevents an additional 200 accidents per year.

Studies of similar systems in the United States indicate that they resulted in 0.95-15.6 million vehicle-hours saved per year in urban areas. Pennsylvania's I-95 TIMS system has decreased highway incidents by 40% and cut closure time by 55%.

5.6 Driver Education – **The Panel recommends that an extensive and long-term driver education program be launched to improve driver behaviour generally and specifically to improve behaviour surrounding highway incidents.**

The program should be cost-shared with the private sector, and should focus on ensuring that drivers know their responsibilities and reporting obligations in accident situations; make way for

emergency services vehicles; understand that "rubbernecking" is a dangerous activity; and drive in the far right lanes except when passing (latter point does not apply to highways).

MTO's Road Users Safety Division is currently working on this project, and this recommendation was also supported by the Incident Management Task Force.

5.7 Minimize Rail Transit Disruption Due to Incidents at Grade Crossings – **The Panel recommends that discussions among emergency services operators and rail corridor users be initiated to implement measures and protocols to minimize disruption to rail transit due to incidents at grade crossings.**

Incidents at grade crossings can affect transit services across the transit system, and should be a priority for incident management to ensure smooth transit operations resume as soon as possible.

APPENDIX A: CENTRAL ONTARIO SMART GROWTH PANEL AND UNLOCKING GRIDLOCK SUB-PANEL MEMBERSHIP

CENTRAL ONTARIO SMART GROWTH PANEL
Mayor Hazel McCallion, City of Mississauga and Central Panel Chair
Dr. Gordon Chong, GO Transit Chairman and Central Panel Vice-Chair
Mayor Marcel Brunelle, Town of Whitby
Debbe Crandall, Executive Director, Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition
Brian Desbiens, President, Sir Sandford Fleming College
Tony Dionisio, Business Manager, Universal Workers Union, Local 183
Mayor Ron Eddy, Brant County
Jim Faught, Executive Director, Federation of Ontario Naturalists
Chair Bill Fisch, York Region and Rethinking Waste Sub-Panel Chair
Peter Gilgan, President, Mattamy Homes Ltd.
Mayor Robert MacIsaac, City of Burlington and Smart Growth Strategy Sub-Panel Chair
Warden Ron Millen, Peterborough County
Mayor Ann Mulvale, Town of Oakville
Mike Murray, Commissioner, Transportation and Environmental Services, Region of Waterloo
Fraser Nelson, General Manager, Metrus Development
Deputy Mayor Case Ootes, City of Toronto
John Sheridan, President, Bell Canada
Mayor Bob Wade, City of Hamilton

UNLOCKING GRIDLOCK SUB-PANEL
Dr. Gordon Chong, Unlocking Gridlock Sub-Panel Chair and Central Panel Vice-Chair
Mayor Hazel McCallion, City of Mississauga and Central Panel Chair
Joe Berridge, Partner, Urban Strategies, Inc.
Rob Bradford, President, Ontario Road Builders' Association
Mayor Nancy Diamond, City of Oshawa
Tony Dionisio, Business Manager, Universal Workers Union, Local 183 and Central Panel Member
Mayor Susan Fennell, City of Brampton
Jim Faught, Executive Director, Federation of Ontario Naturalists and Central Panel Member
Chair Bill Fisch, Region of York and Central Panel Member
Stuart Kendrick, General Manager, Operations, Greyhound Bus Lines
Mayor Ann Mulvale, Town of Oakville and Central Panel Member
Fraser Nelson, General Manager, Metrus Development Inc. and Central Panel Member
Deputy Mayor Case Ootes, City of Toronto and Central Panel Member
Michael Roschlau, President and CEO, Canadian Urban Transit Association
Earle Rowe, President, TMG Transportation Management Group
Councillor Joan Sutherland, Town of New Tecumseth, 1st V-P Ontario Good Roads Association
Doug Switzer, Manager Government Relations, Ontario Trucking Association
Sue Zielinksi, Director, Moving the Economy

APPENDIX B: REPORTS, INITIATIVES, AND PRESENTATIONS

Over the course of the Sub-Panel and Panel discussions, previous and ongoing initiatives were considered, specifically including:

- Input from the Ontario Smart Growth consultations undertaken in 2001.
- MTO's regional Strategic Transportation Directions planning process (underway).
- The Greater Toronto Services Broad (GTSB) *Removing Roadblocks, a Strategic Transportation Plan for the GTA and Hamilton Wentworth* (2000).
- *Transit Corridor Priorities and Phasing*, prepared for the GTSB by ENTRA Consulting and others (2001).
- *The business case for inter-regional regional Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in the GTA* prepared for the GTSB by McCormick Rankin International (2001).
- *Transit-Supportive Land Use Planning Guidelines* produced by MMAH and MTO (1992).
- GO Transit *10-Year Growth Plan* (2002).
- TTC ideas and plan for short term actions to increase transit use (including actions transferable to other transit authorities).
- Opportunities for the private bus industry in provision of inter-regional transportation, presented by Greyhound Bus Lines.
- *Goods and Services Movement Strategy Phase I*, prepared for the GTSB by IBI Group and others (2001).
- Recommendations of the Red Tape Commission's Task Force on Highway Incident Management, presented by MTO.

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